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SUBJECT: AUSTRIA: ADDENDUM TO 2009 TERRORISM REPORT

REF: A)09 STATE 109980
B)09 VIENNA 1589

¶1. Per reftel A, Post is submitting an addendum to the 2009 Country Report on Terrorism for Austria (reftel B).

Addendum

¶2. (SBU) Austrian authorities on December 28 arrested Peter Walaschek, a German citizen who pled guilty in a U.S. court in 1988 to shipping 115 tons of thiodyglycol, a chemical used to make mustard gas, to Iran. Walaschek later fled the U.S. and had been on the FBI's wanted list for the past 21 years. Relying on cooperation with the FBI, Tyrolean police nabbed the German citizen during a ski vacation in Austria with his family. While Austrian prosecutors demanded that Walaschek be held in custody until his extradition to the U.S., a judge at the regional court in Innsbruck decided that there was "no legal basis" for such action and ordered Walaschek's release. The court argued that an Austrian law banning trade in weapons of mass destruction did not go into effect until 1997, 10 years after the offense was committed.

¶3. (SBU) In late December 2009, a banned radical Islamic organization sent a threatening letter to GOA Women's Minister Gabriele Heinisch-Hosek after she said publicly that the burqa "hinders women from finding jobs" and expressed support for the idea of a ban against burqas in public buildings. In a letter to the Minister, the Lebanon-based organization Hizb ut-Tahrir condemned Heinisch-Hosek's remarks and threatened her using what it said was a quote from the Koran: "And know that Allah is strong in punishment." Hizb ut-Tahrir was banned in 2003 in Germany for its support of violence. Austrian authorities say they have been observing the organization's activities for some time.
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